



**AttachH – HDC Staff  
Recommendation**

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

June 9, 2005

**TO:** Historic Preservation Commission

**FROM:** Shelby Spillers, Preservation Planner

**SUBJECT:** Evaluation of Significance to Rockville of 150 Maryland Avenue, 101, 103, 105 and 107 Fleet Street, and 209, 211, 213, 215 Monroe Street.

**DESCRIPTION:** Block 2, original lots 1-Pts 1-6, 8 and 10; Rockville Heights

**OWNER:** Montgomery County, Maryland

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Based on the facts and evidence in the attached Maryland Historical Trust Site Inventory form, Staff finds that these properties meet the adopted Rockville criteria for a local historic district with the following classifications, and are eligible for recommendation by the HDC to the Mayor and Council for further review:

**Landmark:** 107 Fleet Street, the Robertson House, eligible for designation as a single site historic district.

**Contributing:** 150 Maryland, 101, 103, 105 Fleet Street, 211, 213 and 215 Monroe Street

**Non-Contributing:** 209 Monroe

See the Maryland Historical Trust Site Inventory form for further information.

These properties are being evaluated for historic significance evaluation to the City of Rockville in response to a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the redevelopment of these properties. The Mayor and Council asked staff to begin the historic significance evaluation process for the existing former residences on the property in order to determine the significance as part of the planning process for the parcels.

The following is a summary of the evaluation of significance, which can be read in detail in the attached Maryland Historical Trust Inventory form.

### **Historical Significance**

The residential properties on Block 2 of Rockville Heights illustrate the history of the Rockville Heights subdivision. The 1889-90 platting of "Rockville Heights" on the old Carter farm attracted real estate Investors from Washington City, such as D.C. hotelier Malcolm S. McConihe, as well as local elite families of Rockville who built houses there in the blocks convenient to the town center. The plan called for wide boulevards, circles, parks and lakes; similar features to those planned for the competing West End park development. The large homes built by the Vinson, Peter, Warfield, Bouic and Robertson families were located in the most northern blocks of the Rockville Heights development and very little development occurred further south. Until late in the second quarter of the 20th century, most of Rockville Heights remained open fields and meadowlands. Monroe Street and Maryland Avenue ended abruptly at these vacant lands, and the gradual abandonment of the planned 32-block subdivision is documented in six Equity cases. The subject dwellings were built between 1904 and ca. 1940 and represent a library of the architectural styles that span period styles and economic classes, and represent a concise history of the development of Rockville Heights in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

### **Architectural Significance**

The Block 2 houses are all products of the first half of the Twentieth Century, with most of them built between 1920 and 1940. They share similar construction and materials, being stick built on the site by individual craftsmen of wood and masonry products. The period of construction was before air conditioning was commonly available or affordable; therefore all of the houses have a front porch and traditional double-sashed windows on all elevations for the cross ventilation that made these houses livable in the summer.

The residential structures on Block 2, Pts 1,2 and 6,8 and 10 (150 Maryland Avenue, 101, 103, 105 and 107 Fleet Street) represent an intact, cohesive streetscape illustrating the chronology and early architectural history of the Rockville Heights subdivision. These five houses are unified in front setbacks, similar lot size and layout, and retention of residential appearance and character. The dwellings were built between 1904 and 1936 and represent a library of styles from the time period. These dwellings were middle-to-upper-economic-class two story houses. Each of the custom-built houses maintains a distinct individuality and demonstrates the massing and details that fix them stylistically in the period. They have been clad with stucco and the roofing materials have been replaced over the years. These alterations are considered by National Register Standards to have minimal impact on the integrity of the structures.

Four of the houses (101, 103, and 105 Fleet Street and 150 Maryland Avenue) were built by Robert C. Warfield, owner of a large house on the north (opposite) side of Fleet Street for sale of rental. They were used as privately owned residences until their purchase by Montgomery County. Adapted to accommodate several small government agencies, the basic residential

character has been preserved. Items such as ADA required handicapped ramps and exterior egresses could be removed without damage to the main block of the structures or impairment of its residential character.

Rockville architect Thomas C. Groomes used high style Georgian architecture to design the 1904 house at 107 Fleet Street. The Robertson family occupied the home for 65 years until its adaptation by the Montgomery County government for use as a medical clinic and office. The three small McConihe houses at 211, 213 and 215 Monroe (Block 2, Pts lots 4, and 5 of Rockville Heights) were constructed in the late 1930s or early 1940s. They are modest vernacular-styled dwellings of the period and do not exhibit distinct stylistic massing or details. The size of the one-story dwellings is less than 1,000 square feet. The massing, size, detail and lack of distinctive style identify these dwellings as houses for people of more modest means. They do not convey the same sense of mass and stature as the larger, more prominent houses on Fleet Street and Maryland Avenue, but still contribute to the chronological period of the district. Although these three houses do not share an association with either the Warfields or the Robertsons, they were developed around the same time as the other houses and therefore contribute to the overall district connected with Block Two, Rockville Heights. The house at 209 Monroe was built in 1951 on lot 3, block 2 of Rockville Heights. The property had formerly been the rear yard and tennis court of the Robertson House at 107 Fleet Street. It is over 50 years old and eligible for consideration by age, but does not share the period and stylistic features of either the Fleet Street or Monroe Street houses. Therefore, staff recommends that this house be listed as a non-contributing structure.

### **Cultural and Social Significance**

The 1890 development of Rockville Heights created a park-like environment close to the downtown area, but away from the stores and industrial shops where merchants and craftspeople usually lived close to their businesses. The proximity to the courthouse and government offices and to the railroad attracted persons of more than moderate means, business and professionals, who purchased these homes close to the downtown, but away from its noise, odors, and activity.

Rockville Heights attracted the attention of investors, one of who was Clifford H. Robertson, a young attorney in Rockville. He purchased the lot at 107 Fleet Street in 1902 and moved into the home in 1904. He had a successful practice, illustrated by the fact that his house was designed and built by noted local architect Thomas C. Groomes.

Robert C. Warfield was the only Rockville dentist of his time and one of the first to build a residence in the Rockville Heights development. Between 1926 and 1927 Dr. Warfield financed the construction of the three houses at 101 and 105 Fleet Street and 150 Maryland Avenue, which were then sold to prominent Rockville families. In 1936, he built the Tudor inspired house at 103 Fleet Street, which was used as rental property.

Rockville Heights was subdivided with the promise of being a prominent park-like Rockville neighborhood. Financial conditions and competition with other developments in Rockville and those in Bethesda and along the Metropolitan Railroad line ensured that it did not fully develop until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. These properties remain an illustration of the optimism and what might have been.

**Archeological resources: Low potential**

There is always some potential for discovery of archeological resources. However, since these properties were developed after the installation of city water and sewer facilities, the possibility of finding pockets of artifacts in abandoned wells and privies is minimal. It is less likely that discoveries in this area would further our understanding of the history of the area.

Attachments:

Adopted City of Rockville Historic Designation Criteria  
Evaluated Property Within Its Historic Context (Guidance)